



**Testimony in support of  
Senate Bill 869: Primary and Secondary Education – Concentration of  
Poverty School Grant Program – Eligibility**

**Budget and Taxation Committee  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Position: Favorable**

March 7, 2023

The Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Coalition), led by Strong Schools Maryland, is a network of 40+ education organizations dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policy changes to further educational equity and build the technical capacity of everyday Marylanders to hold state and local officials accountable to their responsibilities. **The Blueprint Coalition urges a favorable vote on Senate Bill 869: Primary and Secondary Education – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Eligibility.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. The State is making record-breaking investments in education and providing resources to support students achieve educational excellence. Through concentration of poverty grants, the Blueprint provides support and services that address the needs of children in communities with high poverty rates, high crime rates, and those that lack access to adequate health care and social services, with resources provided at the school level and in the community.

Senate Bill 869:

- Expands eligibility for schools to qualify for personnel and per pupil grants under the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program;

- Accelerates eligibility by requiring this change to occur in Fiscal Year 2024; and
- Effectively responds to urgent State needs.

Maryland has now begun including Medicaid data in its direct certification process, which increases eligibility for students and their schools to access certain resources, like the Blueprint's Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program. This new method has identified a blindspot in our counting of students in poverty. **The State has been missing nearly 1 in 9 students** all across Maryland, with especially large concentrations in Montgomery, Anne Arundel, and Prince George's counties.<sup>1</sup> The official count is 110,501 students, and as a result, translates to more than \$1.6 billion in additional compensatory education costs.

This bill addresses the history of underfunding high poverty schools in Maryland. It also expands the eligibility criteria for schools to qualify to become community schools, thereby enabling more students and families access to educational supports and services tailored to their communities. This is what the Blueprint's fourth pillar envisioned: an equitable funding system to meet the needs of all students.

We urge this committee to use this Session to pass legislation that not only addresses the newly identified students in poverty, but also goes above and beyond in ensuring that every student is set up to lead a successful, self-determined life through the foundation of Maryland's World-Class education.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 869.**

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<sup>1</sup> [DLS 2023 Fiscal Briefing](#)